

THE PRE-RAPHAELITE
BROTHERHOOD

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LONDON: GEORGE NEWNES LIMITED
SOUTHAMPTON STREET · STRAND · W.C
NEW YORK: FREDERICK WARNE & CO · 36 EAST 22ND ST.

THE BALLANTYNE PRESS
TAVISTOCK ST. LONDON

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BY J. ERNEST PHYTHIAN



IN the year 1821 Constable prophesied that within thirty years English art would have ceased to exist. His gloomy forecast was not borne out by the event ; but that there was ground for fear, if not for despair, is evidenced by the fact that just about the time our art, according to Constable, should have been at the last gasp, it was indeed so low that there was made for its re-invigoration a very thorough application of a remedy that may not unfitly be likened to the fresh-air cure now so much in vogue for certain physical maladies. It may be that a gentler and more gradual application would have sufficed. But the remedy was, in fact, sharp, and the cure well-nigh instantaneous. Briefly to indicate the nature of the disease from which English art was suffering in the former half of the nineteenth century, and of the remedy by which the progress of the disease was arrested and the patient restored to health, is the object of these pages.

This country was very late in joining the number of those that could boast of a succession of native painters, worthy to be called a school, and giving expression through their art to the national life and character. The great days of Italian painting had gone by ; Germany, Flanders, Holland, France, and Spain had distinguished themselves in the art, while as yet native English painters were few and of only mediocre talent, and our sovereigns were inviting foreigners to come over here and paint their portraits, and those of their families, the members of their Court, and other notable people. Holbein in the reign of Henry VIII., Sir Antonio More in the reign of Mary, Lucas de Heere and Zucchero in the reign of Elizabeth, Paul Veronese, Cornelius Jansen, and Daniel

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Mytens in the reign of James I., Vandyck in the reign of Charles I., Sir Peter Lely in the Commonwealth, and Sir Godfrey Kneller and Antonio Verrio in the reign of Charles II.—such is a list of the principal foreign painters who settled in this country and obtained the greater part of the royal and noble patronage. The lot of the native artists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was perhaps better than, but still may be compared with, the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. But after a Hilliard now, and then an Oliver, and a few other names that emerge into some distinction, the names of native artists to be chronicled largely increase in number towards the end of the seventeenth century; and at last, in the early years of the eighteenth century, England produced in the person of William Hogarth a painter who could do for her what no foreign artist could do: interpret her life from within, with a skill and insight that gave him a high place among the painters of his century. Hogarth painted English life as he saw it, and in refusing to be a slave to artistic tradition, while by no means declining to learn from it, he gave to English art at the outset a characteristic it has never, at the worst, wholly lost, and was a true ancestor of the Pre-Raphaelites.

After Hogarth, native painters of distinction followed each other so quickly that an English school had been securely established—as the event has proved—by only a little later than the middle of the eighteenth century. Richard Wilson and Thomas Gainsborough were but the foremost of a number of landscape painters. Reynolds, nine years younger than Wilson, and Gainsborough, with Romney soon to join them, came behind no foreign rivals, and are ranked among the great portrait painters of their time. Sir Benjamin West, James Barry, and John Singleton Copley, in the second half of the century, were but the chief exponents of historical and classical painting; and George Morland was the best of several artists who found their subjects among the country people and the farmyard animals they tended. In 1775 was born Joseph Mallord William Turner, one of the greatest landscape painters that any country has produced, and he, with Cozens, Girtin, and others whom we need not name, created the modern art of water-colour painting. Constable, whose doleful prophecy we have quoted above, was younger than Turner by only a year, and his work was but little less than epoch-making in the history of modern landscape painting. That with such a record—and we have by no means given it in full—English art should, in 1821, have been thought capable of dying out within thirty years, was, to employ once more a useful metaphor, as if one who had seemed to be in robust health had suddenly been found to be smitten with incurable disease.

There was disease, indeed, as we have already said, but it was not incurable. Our artists were contracting the vicious habit of relying too much on precedent and convention, and were losing touch with nature and life; many of them were, in the words of Mr. Holman Hunt, "creatures of orthodox rule, line and system." It was the work of men who could be thus described that gave rise to, and partly justified, Constable's

gloomy forecast. By the mid-century the condition of art had become worse—and better, for already there were not lacking signs of return to sounder theory and more healthy practice. In his introduction to the reprint of the *Germ*, the short-lived organ of the Pre-Raphaelites, Mr. W. M. Rossetti thus describes the state of things immediately before the formation of the Brotherhood. "In 1848 the British School of painting was in anything but a vital or a lively condition. One very great and incomparable genius, Turner, belonged to it. He was old and past executive prime. There were some other highly able men—Etty and David Scott, then both very near their death; Maclise, Dyce, Cope, Mulready, Linnell, Poole, William Henry Hunt, Landseer, Leslie, Watts, Cox, J. F. Lewis, and some others. There were also some distinctly clever men, such as Ward, Frith, and Egg. Paton, Gilbert, Ford Madox Brown, Mark Anthony, had given sufficient indication of their powers, but were all at an early stage. On the whole, the School had sunk very far below what it had been in the days of Hogarth, Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Blake, and its ordinary average had come to be something for which commonplace is a laudatory term and imbecility a not excessive one." This diagnosis by one of the Pre-Raphaelite Brethren of the condition of English art in the year that the Brotherhood was founded, is very instructive. In it we find the clear admission that art, though sickly, was far from moribund. We are given considerably long lists of "highly able men," "distinctly clever men," and young men "who had given sufficient indication of their powers." Most of us, surely, would place G. F. Watts in a much higher category than that of highly able men, and he was already developing his great and unique art. Ruskin said that J. F. Lewis "worked with the sternest precision twenty years before Pre-Raphaelitism had ever been heard of; pursued calmly the same principles, developed by himself, for himself, through years of lonely labour in Syria." In 1842 William James Müller, an artist not mentioned in any of Mr. Rossetti's lists, wrote: "I paint in oil on the spot; indeed, I am more than ever convinced of the *actual necessity* of looking at Nature with a much more observant eye than the most of young artists do, and in particular at skies; these are generally neglected." Other examples might be given to show that there was still much health in many of the older men, and that some of the younger men were finding out how what had been lost was to be regained. What the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood did, as already hinted, was not to cure what, without them, or at least without their organised efforts, would have been incurable, but to make the restoration to health more speedy.

One painter named in Mr. Rossetti's last list, Ford Madox Brown, demands particular attention in connection with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. There has been much discussion as to who was the artist that must be accounted the leading spirit in the Pre-Raphaelite movement. This position has even been assigned to Madox Brown, who was never so much as a member of the Brotherhood. Of course, he might

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none the less have been its inspirer and guide. He anticipated the chief principles adopted by the Brotherhood, and he considerably influenced its members. But there can be little doubt that the movement would have been born and matured without his help; indeed, he rather discouraged it than otherwise, as an organised movement; and mere independent individual efforts alone could not have brought about the revival of art as speedily as did the work of the Brotherhood. Still, as we shall see hereafter, he was so closely associated with its members, that the mere fact of his never having been formally one of them has not prevented the essential identity of his work with theirs from linking him inseparably with them in the history of English painting. Particular account of him must therefore be given here, and it will be convenient to do this now.

Ford Madox Brown was the son of a purser in the British navy, and was born at Calais in the year 1821. He very early showed a love for drawing, and at the age of fourteen was entered as a student in the Academy at Bruges, passing thence to Ghent, and in 1837 to the Academy of Baron Wappers at Antwerp. Here he received a thorough technical grounding, not only in painting, but in etching, lithography, pastels, fresco and other processes. In 1840 he went to Paris, and it was there, as he himself tells us, that he formulated and began to put into practice his own theory of the relation of art to nature; resolving, for one thing, on "a system of individualised and truer light and shade—daylight, morning, afternoon, indoor and outdoor light, and so forth." In 1845 he visited Italy, where he was greatly impressed by the works of the earlier as well as of the later Italian painters. He found out for himself the painters who preceded Raphael before the Pre-Raphaelites themselves discovered them; and if *post hoc* were always *propter hoc*, the Brethren would have had to own him as the true and only begetter of their artistic life.

But, a few years later, a young student in the Royal Academy Schools worked out for himself, quite independently, practically the same principles as those at which Madox Brown had already arrived. This was William Holman Hunt, who was the son of a London warehouseman in the Manchester trade, and was born in Wood Street, Cheapside, in April 1827. He was taken from school before he was thirteen years old, as he showed little inclination for learning, and was placed first with an auctioneer and then with the London agents of Richard Cobden, the famous advocate of Free Trade, who was a calico printer. The boy, who had drawn in his copybooks at school, was encouraged in his juvenile love for art by his first employer, and then by a fellow clerk of his second employer. He drew flies on the office window-panes with such Pre-Raphaelite fidelity to nature that Mr. Cobden's agent vainly endeavoured to brush them away! Here, surely, was a youth destined for art; but it was against the wishes of his family that he adopted not as a pursuit. After early struggles of the usual kind, he became a

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probationer in the Academy Schools, at the third attempt, in 1844, and a student in the following year, when he was seventeen years of age.

We may advisably quote his own brief summary of the beginning of that theory and practice of art in which he has continued during the whole of a long life. In an article on Pre-Raphaelitism in Chambers's Encyclopædia, after describing, in words already quoted, the condition of art in his student days, he says: "One of the earnest young students of the day was William Holman Hunt, who, already feeling his way as a practical painter, was led by circumstances to study in exceptional degree the works of the greatest old masters, and he perceived that in every school progress ended when the pupils derived their manner through dogmas evolved from artists' systems rather than from principles of design taught by nature herself. He determined, therefore, for his own part, to disregard all the arbitrary rules in vogue in existing schools, and to seek his own road in art by that patient study of nature on which the great masters had founded their sweetness and strength of style. Without any idea of 'forming a school,' but for his own development alone, he began to study with exceptional care and frankness those features of nature which were generally slurred over as unworthy attention; and to this purpose he found most timely encouragement in the enthusiastic outburst of Ruskin's appeal to nature in all vital questions of art criticism as expressed by him in 'Modern Painters.'" How thoroughly adapted was Ruskin's teaching to confirm Hunt in the principles he was formulating for himself, one passage from "Modern Painters," often quoted in this connection, will suffice to show. "From young artists nothing ought to be tolerated but simple, *bona fide* imitation of nature. They have no business to ape the execution of masters; to utter weak and disjointed repetitions of other men's words; and mimic the gestures of the preacher, without understanding his meaning or sharing his emotions. We do not want their crude ideas of composition, their unformed conceptions of the Beautiful, their unsystematised experiments on the Sublime. We scorn their velocity, for it is without direction; we reject their decision, for it is without grounds; we condemn their composition, for it is without materials; we reprobate their choice, for it is without comparison. Their duty is neither to choose, nor compose, nor imagine, nor experimentalise; but to be humble and earnest in following the steps of nature and tracing the finger of God. Nothing is so bad a symptom, in the work of young artists, as too much dexterity of handling; for it is a sign that they are satisfied with their work, and have tried to do nothing more than they were able to do. Their works should be full of failures, for these are the signs of effort. They should keep to quiet colours, greys and browns, and, making the early works of Turner their example, as his latest are to be their object of emulation, should go to nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning and remember

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her instructions; rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing."

Perhaps there is a too violent swing of the pendulum from the side of art to the side of nature in these early theorisings of the great painter and the great writer; but we must not enter here upon a discussion that would be too long for far more than all the space at our disposal. Our task is expository, not critical: to show how the young artists who were to revolutionise English painting set about their work. We know sufficiently well, from the above quotations, where Holman Hunt was in the later years of his studentship. Let us turn now to another of the members of the Brotherhood.

The first two to become closely acquainted with each other, of the three young art students who were soon to found the Brotherhood, were Holman Hunt and Millais. John Everett Millais, whose father was a native of Jersey, was born at Southampton on June 8, 1829. At a very early age he displayed extraordinary skill in drawing, and was only about nine years old when Sir Martin Shee, then President of the Royal Academy, on being shown some of his drawings, told his parents that "nature had provided for the boy's success." He was at once placed in the drawing school of Mr. Sass, took the same year the silver medal of the Society of Arts for a drawing from the antique, and two years later entered the Academy Schools at an age so early as to be, and remain, a record. Here he carried everything before him, obtaining a silver medal in 1843 and a gold medal in 1847, being then only eighteen years of age. We have seen Etty included in Mr. William Rossetti's list of highly capable painters. In a lecture on Victorian Art, Madox Brown says of him: "He taught Millais and all our school to colour. We all went to him to learn flesh painting, but so subtle was his touch and exquisite the tints he could produce with his three or four pigments, that the more they gazed at him the less they knew. A whole school followed him—Frith, Egg, Elmore, Hook, Poole—but at such a distance that no one found it out. The only one who caught some of his inspiration was William Hunt, who stippled in water-colours. Millais, also, when quite a boy, watched him and extracted some of his secret, which was an open one to genius." It was, in fact, as an admirer, almost a disciple of Etty, that Millais, towards the end of his studentship, showed signs of commencing his career as an artist. This is well seen in such early pictures as *Pizarro Seizing the Inca of Peru*, and *Cymon and Iphigenia*. It was at this time, however, that he became acquainted with Holman Hunt, and the latter tells us, in the article already quoted, that "this youthful friendship led to frequent consultations over the needs of the growing generation of artists, and Millais declared his confidence in the closer study of nature, which he determined to adopt as soon as work to which he was committed should be completed." Thus the "emulator of the pseudo-classical Etty," as Mr. Hunt calls him, became a convert to "the return to nature."

• Holman Hunt, then, having found his way to the earnest study of nature as a basis for art—Ruskin helping him on the road—in turn pointed out the way to Millais. And hardly had Hunt and Millais become acquainted, before they were joined by another Academy student, of whom we must now give some account.

Gabriel Charles Dante Rossetti was born in London on May 12, 1828. His father, Gabriele Rossetti, was an Italian exile who became Professor of Italian at King's College. His maternal grandmother was an Englishwoman. Gabriele had three other children, Maria Francesca, William Michael, and Christina Georgina. Of this highly gifted family it must suffice to say that each of its members became distinguished as a writer, and Dante Gabriel—as he chose to call himself—also as a painter. From his earliest years he breathed an atmosphere of romance, of literature, and of art. Four years later than Millais, and two years after Millais left it, he entered Sass's Academy, then kept by a Mr. Cary, and after remaining there four years, passed to the Academy Schools. Neither at the one place nor the other did he work with sufficient steadiness to receive a thorough grounding in the practice of his art; indeed, he did not proceed to the Life and Painting Schools at the Academy. For a time, it seemed likely that he would abandon painting for poetry, in which, as early as 1847, he did such enduring work as "*The Blessed Damozel*." But he had already seen and admired Madox Brown's *Parisina*; and the same painter's cartoons exhibited in Westminster Hall, and his *Wickliffe Reading His Translation of the Bible to John of Gaunt*, exhibited in 1848, so aroused his enthusiasm that he forthwith wrote to the artist asking to be received as a pupil. The story has often been told how Madox Brown, smarting under lack of appreciation, suspected a practical joke, and called at the address given in the letter armed with a thick stick and prepared to chastise the offender should his suspicion prove to be correct. He found, however, that Rossetti was in earnest, and acceded to his request. The relation of master and pupil did not last long. Rossetti was set to draw jars and bottles, and Pegasus soon kicked over the traces. At the Royal Academy Exhibition that year Rossetti saw Holman Hunt's *Eve of St. Agnes*, admired it, and forthwith sought that painter's help. Hunt, seeing that his pupil could be drawn but not driven, set him to work on a design with a literary motive, but including still-life accessories that would develop his technical skill. Thus the pill was sugared, and by August of the same year Rossetti was sharing his studio, and Hunt, Millais, and Rossetti were brought into close companionship.

It was well for English art that these three young men thus came together. Separately they might have achieved little or much, but they could not have accomplished that of which they actually proved capable: the carrying of revolution to a speedily successful issue. Each contributed to the common stock of ability something that the others lacked, and the whole was a combination of brilliant gifts. Holman

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Hunt was a sound craftsman, unfailingly conscientious and painstaking in his work, and resolved to devote his art to the highest purpose. Millais, as we have seen, had met with unprecedented success as a student, and was already looked to for great things. A movement in which he took part could not fail for lack of notice, and even if opposition should come—as it did, and of the bitterest kind—he had a buoyancy of spirit that would bear up bravely against it long after most men would have succumbed. Rossetti's technical equipment was far inferior to that of the other two, but he overflowed with zeal and enthusiasm, was a born inspirer of men, and had great imaginative power. Revolt was not far distant when these three had begun to discuss together the problems of art.

The final resolve was precipitated by the study of Lasinio's engravings of the frescoes in the Campo Santo at Pisa, which revealed to the young students an art not satisfied with itself, but reaching after higher things, and earnestly seeking to interpret nature and human life. To be of the same spirit as the painters who preceded Raphael, using art as a means to noblest ends, and not merely to emulate the accomplishment of Raphael, as if art had said its last word when he died, was the ambition that the engravings awakened in the three young artists as they studied them. They were not blind to the genius of Raphael, nor did they deny that art had accomplished great things after his time; but, in Holman Hunt's own words, "It appeared to them that afterwards art was so frequently tainted with the canker of corruption that it was only in the earlier work they could find with certainty absolute health. Up to a definite point, the tree was healthy: above it disease began, side by side with life there appeared death."

Propaganda definitely decided upon, the young artists formed themselves into a society, for which they chose as a title "The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood," and they proceeded to enrol four other members—James Collinson, a painter, Thomas Woolner, a sculptor, F. G. Stephens, a painter who afterwards devoted himself to literature, and Rossetti's brother, William Michael, a writer and critic. It is not certain whether or not Ford Madox Brown was invited to join the Brotherhood. On the whole, the probability is that he was not so invited. Mr. Holman Hunt has said definitely: "The Pre-Raphaelites, although admiring the genius displayed in the works of Madox Brown, did not ask or desire him to become a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, although, almost entirely owing to the influence of Rossetti, an invitation was framed but never delivered. Their reasons were: (1) That he was rather too old to sympathise entirely with a movement that was a little boyish in tone; (2) that although his works showed great dramatic power, they had too much of the grimly grotesque to render him an ally likely to do service with the general public; and (3) that his works had none of the minute rendering of natural objects that the Pre-Raphaelites, as young men, had determined should distinguish their works." Madox Brown

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himself expressed his dislike of cliques. The aims of the Pre-Raphaelites were practically identical with his own, and there is no doubt that he influenced them considerably both in example and precept. But so far as the organised movement was concerned, he was certainly not a sympathiser, and his influence must have been deterrent rather than encouraging. It is for this reason that he cannot be given, not merely a high place, but any place at all, amongst those who accomplished speedily that which but for their organised revolt might not have come about for many years. For the victory was greatly helped by the very fierceness of the attack they drew upon themselves. It gained for them, as we shall shortly see, a most powerful ally.

Before recording the story of their conflict with the defenders of the then current principles and practice of art, we must learn more clearly what it was for which they had determined to fight. Mr. William Rossetti has thus summed up the matter. They were agreed that, to be a Pre-Raphaelite, it was necessary: "(1) To have genuine ideas to express; (2) to study nature attentively, so as to know how to express them; (3) to sympathise with what is direct and heartfelt in previous art, to the exclusion of what is conventional and self-parading and learned by rote; and (4) most indispensable of all, to produce thoroughly good pictures and statues." It will be observed that nothing is said here about the "minute rendering of natural objects" which Mr. Holman Hunt says, as quoted above, "the Pre-Raphaelites, as young men, had determined should distinguish their works." Also we may note that while Mr. F. G. Stephens has said that one of their principles "was to the effect that when a member found a model whose aspect answered his idea of the subject required, that model should be painted exactly, so to say, hair for hair," Mr. William Rossetti has denied that such a principle was ever adopted. The explanation of these discrepancies is, of course, that the Brotherhood was not a company with a prospectus accurately drawn up by a lawyer; there was general rather than detailed agreement of aim; and the after-recollection of each member as to that agreement has been coloured by what was in his own mind at the time. It is significant that while Holman Hunt has remained faithful to the delineation of minute detail throughout his career, Rossetti never troubled himself overmuch about it, and Millais abandoned it before many years had elapsed. Even Holman Hunt has definitely stated that, though this principle was adopted for their work as young men, it was never intended to be binding upon them in later years. The Pre-Raphaelites were sufficiently agreed to unite in a revolt; they were not sufficiently alike in temper and aim to ensure that their practice should remain identical in after years, even if it were so at the outset, and even this was only approximately the case. We may note also that Ruskin's advice to be absolutely faithful to nature was only addressed to young artists, and that, immediately after the passage in "Modern Painters" quoted above he says: "Then when their memories are stored,

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and their imaginations fed, and their hands firm, let them take up the scarlet and gold, give the reins to their fancy, and show us what their heads are made of. We will follow them wherever they choose to lead; we will check at nothing; they are then our masters, and are fit to be so. They have placed themselves above our criticism, and we will listen to their words in all faith and humility; but not unless they themselves have before bowed, in the same submission, to a higher authority and master."

Revolt was determined upon and the standard of revolt had to be raised. This was done in the year 1849, when each of the three painters exhibited a picture with the letters "P.R.B." appended to his signature. Either the letters were overlooked, or their significance was not understood, for they passed without notice; and all the three pictures were favourably received. They were Holman Hunt's *Rienzi Swearing Revenge over his Brother's Corpse*, Millais's *Lorenzo at the House of Isabella*, and Rossetti's *Girlhood of Mary Virgin*. The following year Holman Hunt exhibited *A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Missionary from the Persecution of the Druids*, Millais *Christ in the House of His Parents*, and *Ferdinand Lured by Ariel*, and Rossetti *Ecce Ancilla Domini*. Now the storm burst. The meaning of the letters "P.R.B." had become known; and the revolutionary aims of the young artists were bitterly resented and their performances vehemently attacked. The whole Press was against them—excepting the *Spectator*, but there William Rossetti was the critic! In *Household Words* Charles Dickens wrote, with reference to Millais's picture, "You come . . . to the contemplation of a Holy Family. You will have the goodness to discharge from your minds all post-Raphael ideas, all religious aspirations, all elevating thoughts; all tender, awful, sorrowful, ennobling, sacred, graceful or beautiful associations, and to prepare yourselves as befits such a subject—pre-Raphaelly considered—for the lowest depths of what is mean, odious, repulsive and repelling." The previous year's pictures had all been sold. This year there were no sales, with the exception of Millais' *Christ in the House of His Parents*, which, however, had been commissioned by a dealer and long remained on his hands. The rebels were courageous enough to try again, and in 1851 Holman Hunt exhibited *Valentine rescuing Sylvia from Proteus*, and Millais *Mariana in the Moated Grange*, *The Return of the Dove to the Ark*, and *The Woodman's Daughter*. Rossetti did not exhibit any important work; so the other two were left to carry on the conflict. The outburst of indignant protest was more furious than before, and the demand was even made that the offending canvases should be removed from the walls of the Academy.

Now it was that the stalwart ally already mentioned came to the rescue. As we have seen, John Ruskin had already unconsciously helped the movement through "Modern Painters," which Holman Hunt had read. He now wrote two letters to the *Times* in defence of the artists against whom all other writers were unanimous in violent abuse. He

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carried the war into the enemy's camp by replying in detail to various criticisms. The Pre-Raphaelites' pictures had been accused of lacking truth to nature. Ruskin maintained their truthfulness and transferred the accusation to the work of the Academicians. He similarly dismissed, and then brought against the popular painters, such charges as those of faultiness in perspective and lack of light and shade. The light and shade of the Pre-Raphaelites, he declared, was that of nature; the popular painters only gave the dim chiaroscuro of the studio. Hostile criticism first wavered before this vigorous counter-attack, then fled, and the victory was won. That which people could not see for themselves they could see when it was pointed out to them by the author of "*Modern Painters*."

The main facts respecting the Pre-Raphaelite movement appear to be, then, that independently of Madox Brown's earlier "return to nature" Holman Hunt also found his way there, and afterwards induced Millais to follow him; that, although Rossetti had been greatly influenced by Madox Brown, it was Holman Hunt's help that was of most use to him as a painter; that it was when Hunt, Millais and Rossetti were working together that the organised movement, the Brotherhood, was started by them; that they, and more especially Hunt and Millais, bore the brunt of the battle against adverse—we might say hostile—criticism; and that the battle was turned from threatened defeat to almost sudden victory with the help of their literary ally Ruskin.

What had been accomplished? Certain deadening conventions and formulæ had been discredited. Not for the first, nor for the last time had the authorities been shown to lack authority. Nature had been vindicated as the great storehouse of truth and beauty to which the artist must constantly go for suggestion and inspiration, if not literally to imitate what he finds there, if his work is to have vital beauty. There had also been vindicated the artist's right to be himself, to speak his own thought in his own way, not to be called upon to mimic the manner of some one else, however eminent. Such things as these had been gained. To the debit side of the account must be placed some confusion of the boundaries of nature and art, due to excesses inevitably incident to revolt. The gains, however, were permanent. Always hereafter must it be easier for English art to shake off a surplus weight of tradition than it would have been but for the Pre-Raphaelite movement. The losses were temporary. Things lost sight of, or wrongly seen, came into view again when the dust of the conflict had been laid. The Pre-Raphaelite Millais lived to paint *A Souvenir of Velasquez*. The opinion has already been expressed that English art would have recovered from the malady that afflicted it even had the organised Pre-Raphaelite movement never existed. There would still have been such men as Watts, Madox Brown, Holman Hunt, Millais, and Rossetti, and these, and others could not have been killed by the prevailing formalism. But the Brotherhood was formed, Holman Hunt, Millais, and Rossetti did revolt against the

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Academic tradition, Ruskin did come to their help against those who would have shouted them down; it was in this way that the revival was accomplished; and the men and the work they did must ever have a high place in the annals of English art.

There was also gain in the revolution, as against a possible quiet evolution, in the calling out of conspicuous qualities of courage and determination. For a time these young men had to suffer more than abuse, however violent. They had to face actual hardship, to have pictures that had been commissioned left on their hands; and in one case an R.A., who had given Holman Hunt a commission, denied, after the outcry against the Brotherhood had arisen, that he had ever done so. Millais knew what it was to have left on his hands a picture, the money promised for which had been spent beforehand on the mere necessities of life for his parents and himself. Happily, in this case the friend in need soon turned up. The young artists may or may not have known it from the outset, but they had chosen the hardest way for themselves of accomplishing their object; and there is gain, both to one's self and others, in bravely overcoming difficulties.

Where was Madox Brown all this time? He was going his own way, independently of the Brethren, and getting as his portion, not abuse, but mere neglect. Nor did he obtain the approval and defence of Ruskin. It may be said, therefore, that his lot was a worse one than that of the Brethren; and perhaps this is true. Was it wrong, then, to say that, in choosing revolt, they had chosen the hardest way? No; because, at the first, their pictures sold, and it was at least as much their open defiance of authority as the character of their work that raised the outcry against them. Madox Brown's work has not even yet, perhaps, obtained as general approval as was soon obtained by that of the Pre-Raphaelites. This is not said in his disparagement. The present writer has more than admiration, he has reverence, for the genius of the man who painted *Jesus Washeth Peter's Feet*, *Cordelia's Portion*, *Work*, *The Last of England*, and the mural paintings in the Manchester Town Hall. But it was needful to say what has been said in order to determine his relation to the organised Pre-Raphaelite movement. He himself did not wholly approve of it. No wrong is done to him, therefore, by showing that he played no part in it.

Little has been said hitherto with regard to the other members of the Brotherhood, and there is not much to say. Mr. William Rossetti has been quoted more than once. He was a writer from the outset, not an artist, and his work was to act as secretary to the Brotherhood and as editor of its short-lived organ, the *Germ*. Mr. F. G. Stephens, an art student in the days of the Brotherhood, early abandoned art for art criticism. James Collinson made little mark as a painter. He became a Roman Catholic and resigned his membership of the Brotherhood, and his place was taken by Walter Howell Deverell, a painter of much promise, destined, however, to remain unfulfilled, as he died in 1854. The re-

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maining original member of the Brotherhood, Thomas Woolner, the sculptor, exercised but little influence on its fortunes. He emigrated to Australia in 1857.

The Brotherhood itself lapsed within three or four years. Its members soon ceased to add the letters "P.R.B." after their signatures. Each of the three principal ones went his own way. If accurate rendering of detail is to be looked upon as an essential of Pre-Raphaelitism, Mr. Holman Hunt was the only one whose work, in after years, deserved the name. Millais, whom Holman Hunt had converted to his point of view, was wavering in 1858 and became a pervert soon after. Ruskin denounced his change of style as rather catastrophe than fall. It is not within our province to follow his after-career. "This looks easy," he remarked to one who was watching him paint one of his later landscapes, "but I could not do it had I not first painted *Autumn Leaves*." To him "the minute rendering of natural objects" had been a useful discipline which he abandoned when he thought it had served its purpose. As early as 1853 he had been elected an Associate of the Royal Academy, and he lived to occupy the presidential chair. Whether his change of style be approved or disapproved, this is certain: his life-work would have been very different from what it was had he remained "an emulator of the pseudo-classical Etty," instead of coming under the influence of Holman Hunt.

Rossetti's Pre-Raphaelitism was even shorter lived than Millais's. He did not exhibit between 1850 and 1853, and by this date he had ceased to trouble himself about fidelity to natural fact and had begun to produce designs in water-colour of entirely romantic and idealist character. He was only Pre-Raphaelite in that he went his own, not the Academic way; but his way was widely different from that of Holman Hunt and from either the earlier or later one of Millais. The three were agreed not to go the way of the generality of English artists of their time; but, as already said, they differed too much from each other for one mode of expression to suffice for all of them. Nor, in later years, were they more at one as to the things to which they sought to give expression. Holman Hunt became, in the main, the earnest interpreter of the life and work of Christ; Millais looked out upon life, and read and interpreted it, in accordance with the instincts, habits, and point of view of a healthy, simple-minded Englishman. Rossetti, poet as well as painter, becoming more and more a recluse, created a world of his own imagining, a world luxuriously beautiful, rich in colour and with heavily scented air, a land like the land of the lotus-eaters, where we fear lest the moral fibre be relaxed. So widely different did the work of each of these painters become from that of the others, that not without difficulty, and only by putting their early works side by side, can we think of them as having together fought a great fight for art.

A few words must be said about the influence of the movement on the after-course of English painting. It was not enough that the men who took part in it should win recognition for their theory and practice of

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art. It was needful that the whole lump should be leavened, or, to revert to the figure with which we started, that the whole body, which was sick, should be re-invigorated. And the movement did, in fact, accomplish what was required of it. Not merely did it quicken a few artists into life, it permeated the whole art of the nation. First came those who may be classed as disciples and imitators, such as Charles Allston Collins, Arthur Hughes, Frederick Sandys, W. S. Burton, W. L. Windus, George Martineau, W. J. Webbe, H. W. B. Davis, and John Brett. Most conspicuous of all was Rossetti's pupil, Edward Burne-Jones, with whom, we may say, came William Morris and Walter Crane, and after him Spencer Stanhope and J. M. Strudwick. Frederic Shields has a place of his own, uniting a religious enthusiasm more intense than that of Holman Hunt with an instinct for symbolism and design akin to that of Rossetti. These names are but a selection from a long list that is ever receiving additions. One can hardly enter an exhibition to-day without seeing work that plainly declares its Pre-Raphaelite ancestry.

Of the wider influence that is semi-conscious, indirect, and partial, that is a consequence of the general awakening rather than of the direct stimulus of the three men who gave it a revolutionary character, this is not the place to speak at length. Even if it came within our scope, an exact estimate of the results of the movement is not yet possible. Our task has been accomplished if we have shown how and by whom Constable's prediction of the decay of English art was happily falsified through a return to nature and a typically English assertion—like that of Hogarth—of the right of the individual not to be made the slave of tyrannous fashion, and of the age not to be held down by the dead hand of the past.

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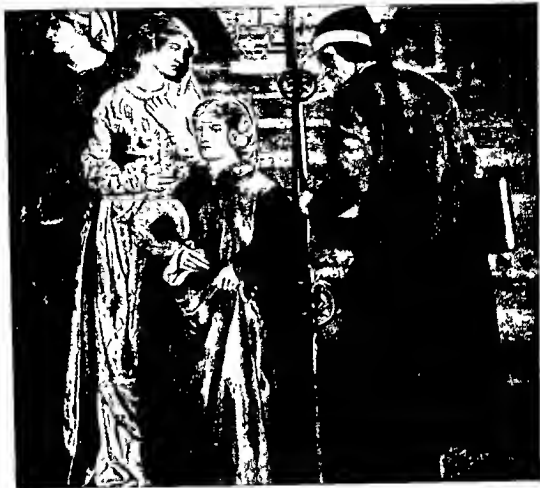


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